

# Honduras

## I. Its Mixed Peoples & Their Pursuits

By Percy F. Martin, F.R.G.S.

Author of "El Salvador of the Twentieth Century," etc.

**C**LAIMING an area of 46,250 square miles, Honduras measures about 375 miles in length by 125 miles in width; much of this territory is mountainous or malarial, and, therefore, commercially unprofitable. The northern and north-eastern boundaries are formed by the beautiful Gulf of Honduras and the Caribbean Sea, while on the south-west and west stretch the Pacific Ocean and the neighbouring States of El Salvador and Guatemala. Ranges of mountains, rising tier upon tier, distinguish all three countries alike; but, fortunately for Honduras, the number of its volcanoes is considerably less, and such craters as exist are—and long have been—quiescent.

Comparatively few members of the Central American chain of volcanoes are of the type with which fierce eruptions are commonly associated, and the fertility of the soil on their flanks and slopes—due to the high percentage of soda and potash contained in volcanic dust—tempts agriculturists to remain even in a neighbourhood that again and again has been devastated—as has been the case in El Salvador and Jamaica. Happily, hitherto, Honduras has escaped such experiences.

### Magnificent, Forested Mountain Heights

The highest of the mountain peaks is a little under 10,000 feet; but there are many that soar above 5,000 feet, while nearly all are thickly clothed with closely-growing forest and dense undergrowth, which take on a rich, deep green in the bright sunlight, imparting a charming aspect as one approaches from the sea. Close to the frontier of Nicaragua one sees the magnificent Juticalpa, Camasca, and Tompocente ranges, all forming part of the immense Antillean system. But there are also

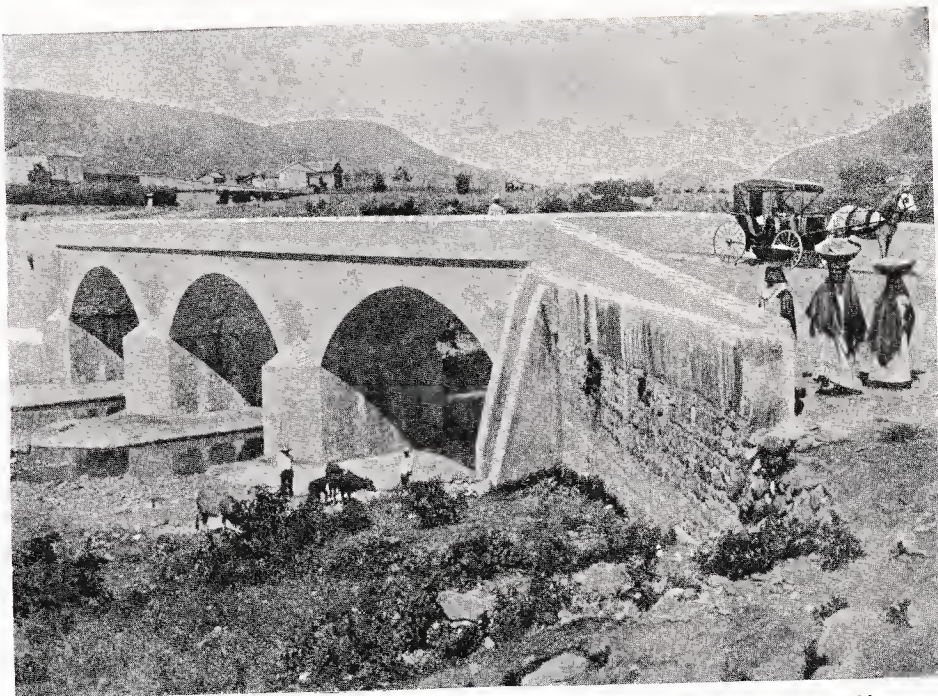
two subterranean ridges stretching across the Caribbean Sea between Honduras and the Sierra Maestra range in Cuba and from Cape Gracias á Dios to Jamaica. No doubt at one remote period the great banks of the western Caribbean formed projections of land connecting Central America with Jamaica—and possibly Cuba.

### Natural Beauties of a Sun-Blest Land

Many and bountiful rivers, like the Choluteca, the Patuca, and the Ulua, and the Chamelícón, León, Aguan, and Triste; large lakes such as Caratasca—really a lagoon—and Yojoa, twenty-six miles long by eight miles wide; fertile plateaux and valleys—the Plain of Comayagua stretches forty miles in length—a wealth of fauna and flora such as can be found in few other countries of the world, are among the natural attractions of this sun-blest land, supplying "all the world's bravery that delights the eye."

The Republic likewise has many excellent ports, the chief one being Amapala on the Pacific; Puerto Cortés and Omoa are on the Gulf of Honduras; La Ceiba, Trujillo, and Roatan on the Caribbean. But Amapala alone offers good anchorage; the others are merely open roadsteads, passengers and goods being taken ashore in surf-boats and lighters. Inland transport is still principally conducted on horse or mule-back. Of railroads—practically all on the Caribbean side—there are fewer than 400 miles in operation.

What sort of people inhabit this region? Where was their original home? How came they to form part of the inhabitants of Central America? Upon these questions authorities differ—as authorities will—though each may base his belief upon reason or experience. The present race, where they are not



#### WHERE THE BROAD HIGHWAY SPANS A SLUMBERING STREAM

Mighty are the piers that uphold this fine bridge, its parapets white in the sun, and the solidity seems unwarranted by the placidity of the river, still enough, despite the shallows, to reflect the arches above. The scene would be very different after the rains, with the flood-water boiling round these stout supports and filling the stony channel. Nor could the oxherd so lightly lead his cattle to water

Spanish, are the offspring of the Caribs, a savage tribe having its original habitat at the headwaters of the Xingen and other southern affluents of the far-away Amazon in Brazil.

Certain it is that the Caribs did not come from the North American Indians, as some writers have boldly declared; but, migrating to the Guianas, they spread from that region to Venezuela, thence north to the Indies, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Remnants or descendants of these primitive people—primitive no longer—may still be found scattered between Central America and Central Brazil. Possessing no kind of political or social adherence, they nevertheless present a sort of kinship which rests entirely on their common speech—a highly polysynthetic stock language represented by a considerable number of extremely divergent branches and dialects.

Travellers penetrating far into the interior of Honduras have found the inhabitants outside the towns and villages a reserved and restless people, somewhat suspicious of all foreigners,

and fearful even of their native rulers. Unlike the conditions prevailing in the neighbouring State of El Salvador, social and political power in Honduras is largely free from the dictates of any middle class. "Hacendados" and "estanciéros"—owners of plantations and cattle-ranches—exercise little influence over the common people; on the other hand, the number of lawyers, bankers, doctors, engineers, journalists and other professional men carry considerable weight, especially among the great mass of people below them.

Physically the natives of Honduras are not unattractive. Some are even handsome. Many of the men are well-built, extremely robust, and stand above normal height; even those inhabiting the malarial coasts display little evidence of ravage by fever. The tribal men have long, narrow faces, slightly oblique eyes, well-shaped noses, and straight, black, usually very dirty hair. In colour their skins are reddish-brown, seldom remarkable for cleanliness. The tribal women are less noticeable for physical allurements; they are and



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always have been the drudges of their men-folk, and bear upon their tired features, and in the neglect of their apparel and person, strong evidence of the hard lives that they lead and the burdens that they must bear to the last days of their colourless lives.

But natives of Honduras, like those of other Spanish colonies in South and Central America, have never been slaves. The Viceroys, fulfilling instructions from the Crown in Madrid, were ever solicitous about the welfare of the conquered races. Enslavement was prohibited. The Indians were legally recognized and treated, at least nominally, as subjects of the Crown. This was designed to protect them against exploitation and oppression, while restraining them from any relapse into the ways of barbarism. But in Honduras, as in all other Spanish-American colonies, through disregard of these pious instructions, the lot of the natives was often a hard one.

The Hondurans are not a fecund race. The population, to-day approximating 600,000 (it was 350,000 in 1861), increases slowly, although large families are not infrequently met with. On the other hand, infantile mortality is large, arising to a considerable degree from neglect and infantile disease.

As in most Latin States, families are closely allied by marriage. Among the wealthier classes young girls are kept under strict surveillance, and marriage is only arranged by consent of the parents. While young men and women are not supposed to go out together without a chaperon, traditional barriers of this character are fast disappearing. The "new woman" is making her appearance here as elsewhere, and with the spread of female education she is likely to become a permanent institution.

As parents, the Hondurans are an affectionate race, not always displaying, however, that intelligence in the training of the infantile mind or in controlling



FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHY AND A HONDURAN HOME

From the father and his elder sons down through stages of graduated growth to the last baby held up above the older heads by the mother standing unassumingly at the back, all the family circle are here on view. As may be imagined, the housing accommodation is not luxurious, and there is not much danger of feeling lonely within the restricted confines of these sun-cracked walls

*Photo, F. J. Youngblood*

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the juvenile propensity for mischief that more advanced nations adopt. From the age of two to six the peasant children are allowed to run almost wild, and a merry life they contrive to lead. Then they become enlisted among the working members of the family, and usually take to the innovation willingly enough. Domestic life is intimate, not to say crowded.

Spanish America, and family life is, for the most part, beautifully portrayed, offering, indeed, in certain respects a marked contrast to that of other nations. The women of Spanish origin consider that they have done their part when they have made their well-ordered houses a pleasant abode for their men-folk and their children. As house-keepers, home-makers, wives and



IN A TOWN OF THE HINTERLAND OF HONDURAS

San Pedro Sula, a place of some eight thousand inhabitants, stands upon the railway from Puerto Cortés to La Pimienta. Above is a photograph of its main street, and a pleasing aspect of the scene is the presence of a border of trees, which give the muddy thoroughfare, rut-worn with the passing of many wheels, an air almost of a boulevard

It is quite a common occurrence to find several generations abiding peacefully, and patiently, amid much inconvenience, under the same roof; married and single members of the family often occupy the same room, the oldest member—grandfather or great-grandfather—being much deferred to, and as a rule, governing his little circle with a despotic but tolerant hand. Indeed, parental authority is greatly respected in this country, as throughout

mothers, the women of South and Central America have little to learn from their European sisters.

No doubt in their original state the native races wore skins. The Caribs knew little and cared less about the weaving of threads for clothing, but purchased, by bargaining their own produce, such materials as came their way in the course of trading. To-day the people are industrious. The usual type of costume, except in the towns,





#### WHERE THE GREAT WHITE ROAD WINDS OVER THE HILLS TO THE SEA

From Tegucigalpa, the capital, for eighty-four long miles, to San Lorenzo on the Pacific coast, stretches the Carreterra del Sur, one of the two principal highways of the Republic of Honduras. The railways being few and far between, communication is very largely dependent on roadways, the mail being chiefly carried by automobiles. The mule is still the chief means of transport



#### FIVE MEN IN A BOAT ON A TROPIC STREAM

As though carving its way through the densely grown forest the river sweeps by, bearing on its glittering surface the idle boating party, who rest on their oars to watch the panorama of nature's bounty. Without either pause or hurry the current glides on, ever broader and more majestic, till, at La Brea, it loses itself in the mighty Pacific



where the latest fashions are in vogue, consists of a shapeless jacket, sack-like in appearance, and trousers, little underclothing, and large, coarsely-woven palm straw hats, conical in shape, with extremely wide brims. Bare feet are usual, with sandals as the chief footwear. The poorer classes are seldom enabled to experience the sensation of being leather-shod until they attain advanced age, and not always then. Yet will they tramp on their bare feet, without hurt or harm, for days on end over the rocky mountain passes, across the sun-heated grass-plains, and through wild jungle growths full of stinging, biting insects. The soles of their feet thus become almost as pachydermatous as the hide of an elephant. The middle-class women workers attire themselves—except on feast and fast days, when they usually wear black—in skirts of dark blue cotton or cloth, a loose cotton blouse with short sleeves, and often the native shawl or rebosa, worn gracefully over the head and falling over the shoulders and arms.

Among the higher classes of the community European style of dress is prevalent, close attention being devoted to the trend of London, Paris, and New York fashions.

Intellectually the Hondurans are in no way inferior to other Indian races; the problem of education remains largely, perhaps even discouragingly, unsolved. Spanish is the ruling language among the better classes, as is the case in nineteen out of the twenty Latin Republics. But one misses the mellow, tuneful accent of the Castilian tongue, such as one meets with in Old Spain.



AT EITHER END OF FOUR GENERATIONS

The old Honduran woman sits before her rude hut blinking in the sunlight that has become too strong for failing eyes. With the aid of two sticks she can still totter about and watch her great-grandchildren at their play

Honduras has no literature, and few among the middle or mercantile class devote themselves to the study of the beautiful Spanish language. The knowledge of other tongues is limited. Native genius, if it exists, has yet to assert itself; but should a representative ever appear he will find in Honduras no such abundance of material as exists, say, in Argentina, Brazil, Chile or Mexico.

Of the 317,000,000 Roman Catholics living in the world, none will be found more devout or more heterodox than the people of Central America. Romanism is the vastly predominant faith, and at all times the churches are crowded with worshippers, while holy feast and fast days are invariably kept with strict



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solemnity. The Hondurans have been reproached by certain writers with being a lazy and indolent race, but although few are "blessed with the horny hands of toil," they are far from that. In common with the other five States constituting the Central American Republics, the people of Honduras are ten per cent.

white, fifty per cent. Indians, and the remainder mestizo or negro. The lower classes are composed of numerous tribes with varying customs, and no doubt a certain proportion of them obey the latent instinct of hatred for physical labour. But consider the climate under which they live—the intense heat, the



SUNDAY MARKET IN THE ISLAND PORT OF AMAPALA

On Tigre Island, in the blue Bay of Fonseca, stands this town with its free port and sheltered roadstead, where the visiting ships find safe anchorage. Above is seen the crowded market, a native woman chewing a cigar and a buyer mopping his heated brow. There is an export trade in silver, coffee, and hides, and steamers call from New York





BATTERY OF HONDURAS ARTILLERY AT PRACTICE MANOEUVRES NEAR LA ISLA

Artillery practice is one of the most stirring of military manoeuvres, and these Honduran gunners are determined to lack nothing in verve and smartness. Unlimbered in the rear, the guns are man-handled into line, a non-commissioned officer marking the position that each is to occupy. In the background, an officer with his orderly stands watching the operation, and all that indicates that this is only practice and not the real thing is the presence of some civilians on the left front



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ever-present malaria (on the coasts), and the slight incentive to active work by reason of the prodigality of food products, both natural and cultivated, around them. In their disinclination to indulge in continuous toil these people differ in no respect from other Indian races living in a land whose soil and climate remove much of the necessity of manual toil.

Labour in Central America generally is independent and proud, feeling little necessity to solicit the patronage of capital. On the contrary, capital, in the person of the contractor and cultivator, has often to solicit the aid of labour. The pernicious preaching of alien labour agitators, however, has penetrated to Honduras, especially at the ports. Unpleasant and usually unprofitable disputes have occurred of recent years. In August, 1920, it was necessary for the United States to despatch the gunboat *Sacramento* to La Ceiba to quell the fierce revolt of labourers in progress there.

### Labour, Politics, and Amusements

Something like 600,000 bushels of maize are grown annually, chiefly in the Departments of Copán, Gracias and Santa Barbara. Millions of bananas are cultivated and exported; wheat, sugar, rice and tobacco, coconuts, lemons and oranges; sarsaparilla, indigo and other dyes and spices are planted; and altogether, through the energies of the working-classes over £650,000 worth of produce is reaped annually, while the Republic records a total annual export worth nearly £2,000,000.

Like most Latin Americans, the Hondurans devote much of their attention to politics. Recognizing the effect that a good or a bad government may have upon individual as well as collective prosperity, every voter—and all citizens over 21 years of age, or over 18 years if married, and who can read and write, have a vote—goes conscientiously to the poll. That they are not always allowed to exercise their privileges when they get there, finding preventive bayonets more plentiful than ballot-boxes, must be admitted.

Located on the river Choluteca, 114 miles distant from the port of Amapala and 207 miles from Puerto Cortés, Tegucigalpa, the capital, 3,500 feet above sea level, must be reached by a tediously long but well-constructed highway. The city is neither picturesque nor beautiful—some might even regard it as distinctly prosaic—but it is fairly comfortable, notwithstanding its sub-tropical climate and average temperature of 74 degrees, its narrow streets and some 40,000 (mostly noisy) inhabitants. Of amusements there are few; the main native attraction in the absence of the popular bull-ring (which the people are too impecunious to afford) is the cock-pit; some of the most valuable game-cocks are bred in Tegucigalpa.

### Great Possibilities for Cattle Raising

Where wealth has been accumulated or acquired—and it is found chiefly concentrated among the old Spanish families established for centuries upon the same domains—it has been created by cattle-raising. No tropical or sub-tropical country possesses better natural facilities for pastoral pursuits than Honduras. With cheap grazing lands, abundant if somewhat erratic labour, salubrious climate and luxuriant vegetation, combined with an exceptional wealth of river, lake and spring water, this favoured Republic might easily rival Argentina or Uruguay in the number and quality of horned cattle that it could rear. And yet in Honduras to-day there are probably fewer than 500,000 head.

One of the most notable features of Honduran forests is the extraordinary number of mahogany trees, veritable giants, growing prolifically and in regiments, practically untouched by the axe, notwithstanding the millions of potential capital that they represent in marketable state. Known botanically as *Swietenia Mahagoni*, this beautiful tree attains a height of 100 feet or more, and grows to an immense girth. Sound throughout, no better wood could be found for the manufacture of furniture.



# Honduras

## II. The Story of the Central American Buffer State

By Percy F. Martin, F.R.G.S.

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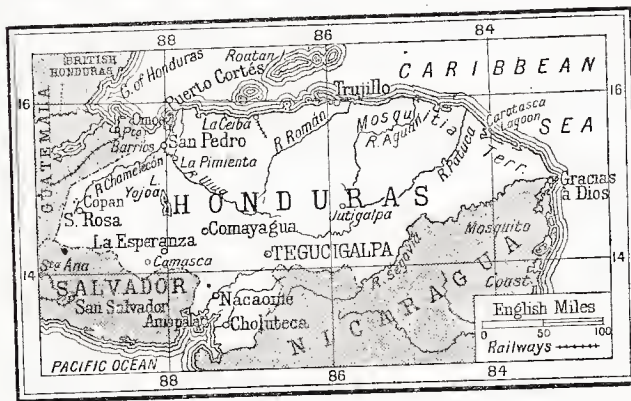
**H**ONDURAS, among other countries of the New World, owes its discovery to the Genoese traveller Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus). Sailing along the coast to Cape Gracias à Dios, on a certain day in August, 1502, upon his fourth and last voyage, and accompanied by his brother Bartolomé, the intrepid explorer landed on these shores, to find the natives unexpectedly friendly, but curious. After formally annexing the country in the name of his Sovereigns, Ferdinand V. and Isabella, Columbus returned to Spain, only to die there, a poor and discredited man, four years later.

The dispatch of Hernando Cortés and his hosts followed. They speedily conquered the country, their colonising progress being accompanied, however, by few

changed conditions. Independence has been described—was it not by Napoleon?—as "a rocky island, like honour, without a beach." The Hondurans soon found that it had its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and self-reliance its drawbacks.

At no time has the small State produced any leader or patriot like Miranda or Sucre, of Venezuela; Bolívar, the Washington of South America; San Martín, the great general of Argentina; Artigas, of Uruguay; O'Higgins, of Chile; or Morélos, of Mexico. But Morazán is still a name famous in Central American history. He it was who led the successful revolt in the nineteenth century against Spain, and although in the end he personally failed to maintain his influence, he failed gloriously.

Honduras' political history proved comparatively uneventful until the struggle for freedom from Spain in 1821. Released from that domination, Honduras joined the Mexican Confederation, but broke away in 1823. Remaining in the Central American Federation, which followed, till 1839, the people formed themselves into an independent and separate State; some twenty years later (November, 1859), Great Britain ceded to them the Bay Islands and, later on, helped to finance their governments. After many tentative forms of



THE REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS

of the customary Spanish brutalities. The fact that there survive to-day numerous pure-blooded descendants of the original inhabitants testifies to the comparative mildness of the conquerors' methods. But their progress was not without difficulties. Writing to Ferdinand's successor, Emperor Charles V., on September 23, 1526, Cortés observed: "I can assure your Majesty that even the horses, led as they were by hand and without their riders over the tops of the hills, sank to their girths in the mire!"

Once free from the bondage of the Spanish vice-royalty—with its perpetual exactions, abuses, cruelties, and injustice—the Hondurans found themselves handicapped by their poverty, and confronted by fresh problems arising from the

administration, the first Constitution was adopted in 1848; the second in 1865; the third in 1880; and the fourth, now in existence, in 1894. The capital was likewise changed from Comayagua to Tegucigalpa.

For years past Honduras has been—and for years to come seems destined to remain—the buffer-State between El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, fated by geographical propinquity to sustain the shock of the rivalries, racial as well as political, of these quarrelsome neighbours. The unicameral Congress sits for sixty days, a period which may be extended forty days at its own discretion or that of the President of the Republic. He may also convene the Assembly in extraordinary session.



## HONDURAS & ITS STORY

In 1860 a filibustering expedition under William Walker, an American of Scottish descent, landed at Trujillo from the United States and attacked Honduras, as Nicaragua had been attacked some years earlier (1855), the latter people being compelled to elect him President. This second expedition proved the last; Walker, surrendering to the British, was tried and executed by his enemies. In 1906 Honduras and El Salvador went to war with Guatemala, while revolutions occurred between 1910-11. Boundary questions with its neighbours led to war on many other occasions. In 1911 King Alphonso XIII. of Spain settled one controversy with Nicaragua, and another with Guatemala two years later. President Dávila, obliged to resign in 1911, was succeeded, by Francisco Bertran (1913 and 1916), and by General Bonilla, a former Executive and refugee in the United States. A far-reaching treaty with the Northern Republic was signed November, 1913.

Several times Honduras has attempted to become a member of a Central American Union, as a safeguard against North American aggression, but no settlement has been reached. One further effort in this direction is being organized under the auspices of a "Central American Federation." The important commercial treaty entered into with Great Britain on January 21, 1887, was "denounced" in October, 1909, and came to an end in 1910. Although determined efforts were made by the British Minister (the late Sir Lionel Carden) to renew and improve the treaty, opposition by the United States Government prevented it.

Yellow fever raged in 1912 and 1919, when the Gracias and Cordona revolutions, among others, occurred, but were speedily suppressed. The British destroyer *Constance* took an effective part. Armed conflicts again ensued between Honduras and Nicaragua, August, 1918, and following months, while trouble threatened with Germany, the President placing an embargo on German lighters and interning their owners. General Rafael López Gutiérrez, a former revolutionary, became Executive in 1920. His opponent—Alberto Membreno, also a former president (he died February, 1921)—had caused popular risings, both United States and British warships again intervening. Fresh revolts broke out (February, 1920), martial law being proclaimed.

In August labour troubles arose, and the U.S. gunboat *Sacramento* landed troops at La Ceiba. In November, the presidents of Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador met at Amapala, and in January, 1921, a diplomatic mission from Costa Rica visited Honduras. On June 5, 1921, was signed the Pact of Union with El Salvador and Guatemala. The finances of the States for 1919-20 fell into low condition, the public accounts showing a deficiency of 1,082,000 pesos, the total outstanding foreign debt (in arrear for nearly fifty years) now exceeding £27,800,000; the home debt reaches 3,556,000 pesos. In March, 1920, the British Controlled Oilfields, Limited, were granted by Congress a concession for oil over territory approximating 30,000 square miles.

## HONDURAS: FACTS AND FIGURES

### The Country

Bounded north by the Gulf of Honduras and Caribbean Sea, south by Nicaragua, Pacific Ocean, and Salvador, and west by Guatemala. Area about 46,250 square miles; population in 1921, 637,114, chiefly Indians, with an admixture of Spanish blood, and on the north a large number of negroes. Includes 17 departments and largely unexplored territory of La Mosquitia.

### Government and Constitution

Republic under charter of October, 1894. Legislative power vested in Congress of forty-two members, one per 10,000 inhabitants, chosen by popular vote for four years, and Council of five ministers; President nominated and elected by popular vote for four years.

### Defence

Universal service in regular army from age of twenty-one to thirty-five; reserves from age of thirty-five to forty. Total force 77,611, of which 21,505 in reserves.

### Commerce and Industries

Chief products: Bananas, coconuts, coffee, tobacco, sugar, indigo, vegetables, yucca, wood, cereals. Castor-oil plant cultivated. Rubber

production is decreasing. Straw hats and cigars made for export. About 500,000 head of cattle. Minerals include gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron, antimony. Exports, 1920-1921, totalled £1,357,147; imports, £4,180,675. Silver peso normally one-half of American dollar.

### Communications

Mules and ox-carts general for travelling and transport. Between 400-500 miles of railways. Telegraph lines 4,663 miles; telephone lines, 877 miles.

### Religion and Education

Prevailing religion, Roman Catholic, but without State aid; all creeds guaranteed freedom. Education free, secular, and compulsory, from age of seven to fifteen. Over 900 schools; Central University, Central Institute for secondary instruction, and a military and automobile school at Tegucigalpa; school of jurisprudence at Comayagua.

### Chief Towns

Tegucigalpa, capital (population, about 40,000), La Esperanza (11,450), Santa Rosa (10,570), Choluteca (8,060), Nacaome (8,150), San Pedro Sula (7,800), Comayagua (3,000).





#### YOUTHFUL ASPIRANTS FOR THE FAVOURS OF CUPID

A quaint vintage custom is observed in the Baja district of Southern Hungary. On certain days the unmarried women and girls, carrying vases of flowers and cooking utensils, go into the fields to prepare a meal for the men-workers. The flowers and fruit are presented, and if a man fancies a particular girl he hands her a large lump of sugarloaf as a token of their betrothal.

*Photo, Kankovszky, Budapest*